

The Builder.

No. CCCCXLIV.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 9, 1851.



IN continuation of our notice of BRISTOL and the visit of the Archaeological Institute, we give to-day a view of the Building in College-green, known as the "MAYOR'S CHAPEL." It is dedicated to St. Mark, and was founded in the 13th century. Its present aspect, however, is much later and not very pure. It has a curious flat ceiling, and some fine glass in the east window. We cannot apply the same term to a modern stained glass window filled with the arms of past mayors of Bristol.

One of the most interesting portions of the building is Sir John Poyntz's chapel at the side of the chancel, which has a vaulted roof with fan groining and a series of beautiful aitches. The tile paving, indented, is very curious.

Some of the monuments, both medieval and of the 17th century, are very interesting. One to William Bride, dated 1590, has a singularly sculptured entablature.

We will now step back to

WELLS,

that we may quote a portion of Professor Willis's remarks on the cathedral there. The lecturer said, in the course of his observations, that,—

"The cathedral consisted of an Early English nave and front, transepts, portion of the choir, which had since been elongated, in the Decorated style, and the tower also carried up in the Late Decorated style, with a mixture of the Perpendicular. There was also a Decorated chapter-house, besides the two great western towers, the upper part of which was also in the Perpendicular style. Such was the general history of the building. They all knew that Bishop Jocelyn, who presided from 1206 to 1242—the very beginning of the Early English style,—built the church, the old Norman church being exceedingly ruinous, as appeared by the history of the canons of Wells. That history gave them no continuous account of the building, and they were obliged to depend for their information on three documents—1st, the *liber albus*, or great white book; 2nd, the *liber ruber*, or red book; and 3rd, another white book, not named. These books contained a number of the records of the chapter, in which the progress and restoration of the cathedral was incidentally spoken of; and from them they learnt that Jocelyn had an authority to enlarge, or, as he said, to rebuild the cathedral, and in doing this he (the lecturer) surmised that the bishop elongated the nave. An examination showed the style of the cathedral to be tolerably homogeneous: there were, however, some traces by which a practised eye could judge where the alterations had been made, inasmuch as the sculpture and enrichments were better executed, and the triforium between the great clerestory windows of the arch above were different in form. When they proceeded into the choir, it would be found that the first three arches were the same as those in the transept: it was, therefore, quite clear that at one time the choir was in the same state as the transept, and that Jocelyn completed it in all the parts necessary for the performance of the service, but that he did not touch the nave. Looking to the existence

of an early English wall on the outside, and comparing the character of the buttresses, he came to the conclusion that at one time the church was cut off with a square end by a high wall. He also inferred that it had a long aisle running round the square, ending, and probably communicating, with a lady chapel. They were aware that the aisle was commonly called the procession-path, because the clergy went out of the doors of the choir to it to visit the various altars, sprinkle them with holy water, and perform their devotions at them; and the arrangement, which was very similar to that at Salisbury, doubtless arose from the aisle communicating with some important altars. The reason why it did not run quite round the transept was because the altars were always placed under the east walls. It was only by the study of these apparently small and minute points that they were enabled to arrive at any knowledge in regard to the arrangement of their cathedrals in former times. He did not consider that the building under Jocelyn proceeded to nearly the length of the present building, and he conceived that the side aisle walls received an interruption. In the best Early English cathedrals the masonry was of the most beautiful kind, the courses being laid with admirable regularity; but that performed in the middle ages was of a more slovenly character. This afforded one of the principal means they had of judging of the periods at which particular parts had been built or restored. For example, if the side aisle walls and nave were thoroughly executed, they would be found much better built than the parts immediately adjoining: in fact, they had three distinct periods in the masonry of the walls. He now came to one of the most strange changes of all. People would call Wells an Early English cathedral; but if they looked at most of their Early English cathedrals, such as at Lincoln, Ely, and Salisbury, and if they examined and compared them, they would find a resemblance between them, showing that they were all of one school of art, erected by masons who worked together, and who only understood one style. Any one well versed in these examples, who came to Wells, would find that its cathedral was a very different thing, and would see at once that the work had been done by a different set of people altogether. Wells cathedral certainly must have been begun five or ten years after Lincoln, which latter was commenced at the latter end of the twelfth century. It was therefore in all probability begun some three years after the commencement of the thirteenth century. Wells was certainly very little removed from the Norman style. It was evidently only an improved Norman edifice, worked with considerable richness. The Early English style probably was introduced from France, as he had shown on another occasion. There must, therefore, have been in the district of Somerset a school of masons who went on working in their own fashion long after the Early English style was introduced and practised in this country. The front of the cathedral was an ordinary style of Early English, the same as at Salisbury and Ely, from which he inferred that before the completion of the work the original architect and his pupils were dead and gone. This showed another curious fact in the history of medieval architecture, inasmuch as it at once disturbed the notion that changes were simultaneous. It was not unnatural, in a district where stone so much abounded, that a style peculiar to it should spring up among masons who were always working together. The tower was in the lower part of Early English architecture, which terminated a short distance above the roof, where in all probability, the tower of the first building terminated, all that was then required being a sufficient tower for the different roofs to rest upon. It was generally attributed to Bishop Jocelyn that he built the church, but the probability was that it was no such thing. No doubt that at different periods he succeeded in getting from the chapter and the canons of the church powers to improve and repair it from time to time, but there was every reason for supposing that the canons them-

selves supplied a large portion of the money for carrying on the work. He had succeeded in discovering in the documents of the chapter entries which went to show that the canons of the church voluntarily taxed themselves, to the extent of a tithe of their means, for five years at a time; and more than that, he found the clergy of the archdeaconry of Taunton transmitting to the dean and chapter of Wells either a tenth or a fifth of their incomes for the work, which the dean recorded in the books, in order, as he stated, to show the world how generous they were, and in order that it might not be made a precedent for the tax. He found that in 1286 the chapter was called together, and there was laid before them the urgent necessity not only of proceeding with the completion of the new structure, which had long before been begun, but that the old fabric might be repaired and sustained. He supposed that the new structure there referred to meant nothing more than the lower part of the chapter-house, which was called the crypt. He took it, that in 1286 this was completed, and that they wanted to carry on the upper part of the work. Next, he found that in 1318 the canons voluntarily taxed themselves a tenth of their means for the new campanile or central tower, and in 1321 came that magnificent voluntary gift from the clergy of the Taunton archdeaconry, towards putting a roof on the campanile. He had now got a date for the tower, 1321: it was clear that it was carried up and finished by a bold stroke. In 1337-8 convocations were called in a great hurry, on account of some imminent emergency, which was stated to be that the tower had begun to settle and crack down, as was not uncommon, because the medieval builders, notwithstanding all the good things said of them, were most rash and unskilful persons, and went on building mass on mass like the Tower of Babel, and then when the edifice began to settle they were driven to all sorts of expedients to bolster. The lecturer then went on to show by reference to many striking points in the building that at some time Wells Cathedral tower must have sunk in this way, and that in order to strengthen it and ensure solidity, the builders were obliged to introduce expedients, which would account for the irregularities and peculiarities observable in the structure. With regard to the lady chapel, great difficulty had been experienced in getting at the date of its erection. There was some tradition about it, but he had been fortunate enough to find an incidental mention of the work, which would give a date. It was a simple license from the Bishop Tokenfield, which license was dated 1326, and by which he assigned to the canon residentiary and his heirs for ever a piece of his own garden. In describing the land he said that it extended "200 or 300 feet from the east end of St. Mary's chapel lately completed." This showed that the lady chapel was finished a few years before 1326. In 1325 they found that the canon set about making new stalls, the old ones being ruinous, and sent to Middleton for the wood. They made an order that every canon should pay for making his own stall, but whether the bishop was to make his own throne also did not appear. This was interesting as showing how money was raised in those days. The canons made their stalls, and as it was hardly likely they would have done so unless the choir was sufficiently advanced to enable them to sit in them, he supposed that they might fix the date of the choir at about that year."

Mr. Cockerell's theory as to the sculptures in the west front of the Cathedral is well known by his published work on it. He estimates the cost of these sculptures at not less than 20,000*l*. Mr. Edward Richardson is now engaged in the restoration of one of the figures, which fell from its place a short time ago. This is being done by the liberality of Dr. Markland.

The restoration of the interior of the Cathedral, under the direction of Mr. Salvin, is making rapid progress. The stone-work has been scraped and pieced: the new stalls are